

COULDN'T GET AWAY

YOU'LL

PLEAD

TOO.



## Couldn't Get Away by LovelyFandomLover

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**Summary:** Lydia Tozier would never admit what horrors kept her up at night. She preferred to pretend she wasn't afraid of anything, that nothing was wrong. But with children going missing every week in her little town and an eerie feeling she's being stalked by something sinister, Lydia realizes she can't get rid of her worst nightmares, no matter how hard she tried to run from them.

# 1. Welcome to Derry!

**Author's Note:** Hello anyone that is reading this! Ever since I saw the movie last year, I knew that I wanted to write something for this fandom, so I've been writing this story when I have the time (which is not a lot, to be honest). And now that they have finished filming *It: Chapter Two* my interest sparked again and decided to give it try with this story and go ahead and publish it!

I'm trying something different with this chapter (not going to lie I'm a little nervous about it), so I hope that you liked it and tell me what you think! I promise you the other chapters are going to longer!

**Rating:** Obviously for anyone that has seen *It*, the movie or read the book, are aware that they have mature content and I am planning to keep that pattern in my story. There are going to be some chapters with certain strong content that might trigger some people, but I will give a warning beforehand so they are prepared.

**Disclaimer:** I do not own *It* or anything related to Stephen King. The only things that are mine are my original characters and anything that else that is original. I am only going to do this once because we all know that no one likes to hear the same thing, over and over again.

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## Prologue: Welcome to Derry!

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Welcome to Derry! Our motto is that life is a smile in Derry.

*(Despite what you may have heard about).*

This little town that is located in Maine. It has such a beautiful scenery, everything looks like it's straight out of a movie.

*(That is if it was a horror movie).*

All your worries vanish the moment you step into our little town.

*(Just like all the children).*

Derry is a town with a rich history, you can instantly feel it when you visit it.

(Can't you feel all that despair? Misery?)

Whether when you visit the infamous kissing bridge or the original campsite of the fur trappers that first settled the land.

*(Whose sudden disappearance are easy to explain and you have nothing to worry about).*

As you discover the town, enjoy the sunshine, hear the birds chirping, children laughing and adults cooking in their grills.

*(And if you listen even closer, you might be able to hear the blood-curdling screams of little children that eternally echo in the sewers).*

The population isn't that big, which is great because there is a real sense of community. Everybody knows their neighbors. No one is a stranger to each other.

*(Everybody just loves talking about the town slut but not about that kid that got attacked by those bullies).*

Speaking of people, the children have a grand time in the town square, riding their bicycles to the Quarry, building boats and chase them in the rain, exploring the one of kind sewer system and discovering new things.

*(Children also have fun being chased around by a psychotic clown).*

Don't worry, there's plenty of fun for the grown-ups. They can go out to the theater and watch the newest film, or dance in the Black Spot until dawn.

*(Just make sure to bring water if you plan to dance, don't want you to die of heat in the dance floor).*

It's outstanding how the crime rate in this town is low. No violent crimes, no murders, no vandalism.

*(Are you sure you're talking about the same Derry?)*

We can all thank the peace to our wonderfully dedicated cops. They do such a wonderful job of keeping the peace.

*(Sure, why not).*

But what truly defines Derry are the people.

*(At least, those that haven't gone missing).*

From helpful shop keeps to loving parents to dedicated cops. The people in Derry are so kind, helpful, and always there when you need help.

*(Yet when a child goes missing, they suddenly are busy with renovating their fucking kitchen).*

Yes indeed, whether you're passing by or returning home for a reunion, there's something for everyone here in Derry.

*(Like, you can make a blood oath promise in the fields.)*

So, come on down, and visit Derry. We promise this place is to die for.

*(Literally).*

It's just a shame that one of its residents, young Lydia Tozier, can't seem appreciate it and can't wait to get away from this fucking place.

*(Don't worry, she might get her wish after all).*

## 2. Tired, Bored and Sad

**Authors Note:** Hi everyone! I'm sorry it took a while. I kept rewriting this chapter, but here's the next chapter. Thank you to everyone that showed interest in this story! It makes me happy that people are interested in this story. I would love it if you let me know what you think. :)

Also, if the narrative seems a little strange, I blame the fact that I have been binge-watching Euphoria and I just fell in love with the way they tell the story.

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### Chapter One: Tired, Bored and Sad

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There was something very wrong with Lydia Tozier.

Not in an *about-to-die-of-a-terminal-illness* way, but more along the lines of *hates-her-life-even-though-what-does-she-even-have-to-complain-about?* kind of way.

Apparently, people like Lydia had it all. So, why would she hate her perfect life?

Her boyfriend would say that it was her parent's pressure that they were putting on her to get the perfect grades. The cheerleading captain would say that she still wasn't able to hit her marks in the cheers. Her friend would say that she was trying to cut down on her smoking. Her mother would say that she was devastated that her boyfriend was moving away next year to college. Her brother would say that she was just a bitch.

Maybe it was one of those reasons. After all her boyfriend was moving away, her parents wanted her to get good grades, and she was doing poorly in cheerleading. Maybe it was all of those things that were getting to her.

Or maybe it was because she was so fucking bored with her life.

Growing up in a small town like Derry, nothing new ever happened. It was always the same thing. She could close her eyes and write down what exactly would happen Wednesday at 4:30 pm (she would wait for Shawn in the football field and let him walk her back home).

It may be bratty of her to complain. She knew that people would give anything to be in her shoes. She was a cheerleader, dating the most popular senior, who happened to be in the football team, her friends were popular, meaning they could hook her up with any alcohol or party invitation she desired. She had made it in high school. She was never going to be bullied, she was never going to have to worry about who was going to sit with her at lunch, she could rely on those desperate boys to do her homework if she didn't feel like doing it.

But Lydia was actually quite nice and very pretty, so there was no reason to bully her. She didn't need to sit with someone at lunch, she actually didn't mind being on her own. She had no problem doing her own homework, and actually helped out her own boyfriend when he was stuck.

Everything was seemingly perfect in her life, and yet...

Lydia hated pretty much everything from Derry. She hated the high school. She hated the townspeople. She hated the town square. She hated the kissing bridge. But, at that very moment, what Lydia hated the most was football games.

She didn't know what she hated the most: how loud they were, how she had to be super perky, how she had to cheer for the football players score a touchdown, or how at everything she had to cheer at.

"Woohoo! Be aggressive!" one of the girls next to Lydia screamed so loudly, it startled her and made her fumble with one of her pompons.

"Go team go!" she said, quickly regaining her footing and joined her fellow cheerleaders as their team caught the ball or something like that. Lydia had been a cheerleader for almost two years, and she still had no idea what happened during the games.

Why did she ever think it was a good idea to become a cheerleader?

"Go, Jacobs!" one of the girls screamed and wasn't the only one as the crowd grew loud at the sight of number fifteen running across the field with the ball.

Oh, right, Shawn Jacobs. All because of one fucking boy that she... well, it was a little complicated how she felt for him at the moment. But she knew that she was never going to make another decision because of a boy.

The thing was that Shawn hadn't forced her to join or suggested it. It had been all her idea. She blamed the hormones and teenage stupidity.

She remembered how he had taken her breath away back in freshman when she first saw him in a pep rally, standing by his teammates and cheerleaders. He was so confident, so boisterous, so good looking.

At that moment, she wanted nothing more for him to notice her. But she was a freshman and he was a junior. He was a football player and she was nothing. She just needed to come up with a plan. Lucky for her, it didn't take long for her. Cheerleading tryouts were that week and Lydia knew that she had it in the bag. Thank God for her mom putting her in ballet when she was little.

"You look so beautiful," her mom gushed as Lydia tried on her new cheerleading outfit and modeled it in her bedroom. "But maybe you need to slim down..."

"Mom, stop it," Lydia ordered her mom and turned back to admire herself in the mirror. "Don't ruin this for me."

She did it, she was a cheerleader and soon, she would be Shawn's girlfriend. And sure enough, that's what happened. Shawn took one good look at her during their first game and that was all it took.

"I don't think we've met," he said going towards her after the end of the game. He gave her that damn stupid charming smile that started it all. "I'm Shawn."

"Lydia," she said, giving him a cool smile.

And like they say, the rest is history.



A loud piercing whistle brought back Lydia to the current game. She winced at the noise and glare at the referee who was signaling the start of halftime.

"Oh, thank God," she muttered and looked around, glad that none of the other cheerleaders heard her. They might strangle her with their ribbons (which didn't sound that bad now that she thought about it).

Her relief was short-lived as she was pushed by someone to do entertain the crowd. She didn't mind that, it was easy. She didn't have to put much effort, she just followed the lead of Heather and the time would breeze by. Too soon for her liking, she was back cheering for the players.

"Woohoo!" Lydia cheered when she recognized Shawn's number run across the field. Glancing at one of her fellow cheerleaders, she shared a wide, excited smile as they shook their pom-poms. When she looked back to the field, her smile slipped but quickly bounced back when Heather, the cheerleading captain looked over at her.

"Go, team go!" she continued cheering, earning a satisfied nod from Heather and when she looked away from Lydia, she mumbled unintelligent words as she continued shaking the pompoms.

Jesus fuck was she bored of this. The games. The cheers. The crowd. The wide smiles. It was always never-ending. She could feel her cheeks aching at the nonstop smiling. Why did she have to smile so much for a high school game? For a small town, they took football seriously.

The game soon ended, Shawns team being the victors. The crowd was roaring in excitement. Lydia was caught up cheering that she had missed Shawn jogging over her until he towered over her.

"Lydia!" he said excitedly, having to practically shout. "We won! We won!"

"Congratulations," Lydia said, her voice being drowned out by the loud commotion around them.

"Thanks!" he beamed, loving every single praised he was getting from

everyone.

"Jacobs!"

Shawn looked back and noticed his coach waving him over. He nodded at him and turned back to Lydia.

"Listen, I have to go. See you soon?" he asked, grinning as if that was the first time they were going to meet after a game.

"Like always," she said, smiling slightly and grimaced when he leaned in and kissed her right in the mouth, being able to taste his sweat. He laughed at her reaction and jogged to the other side of the field to join his teammates. Lydia allowed herself to be pulled by the cheerleaders to the locker rooms.

Entering, she was greeted by the laughter and excited chatter of the girls. Lydia weaved through them until she reached her locker, which happened to be in the middle of the entire commotion.

"Shawn did really good today, didn't he?" gushed Ally, one of the few girls that actually enjoyed watching football.

"Mhm," Lydia hummed as she shimmed out her skirt and threw it to the side carelessly. "Always does. Shawn's the best."

"Yeah, he is, isn't he? My dad was telling me that if he continues doing this well in college, he could go professional. Can you imagine? You could be married to someone famous. You would be so rich."

Lydia took off the rest of her uniform and quickly slipped on her dress and fixed her ponytail. When she turned to Ally, she pointed over her shoulder.

"Heather is calling us. Come on," she said and walked away, not waiting for a response. Ally didn't stop talking to her as they made their way to the field. Lydia only listened to her, not having much to contribute.

"Oh, there's Sam. See you at the diner," Ally said when she spotted her boyfriend and left her alone.

"See you," Lydia said, and soon was joined by her own boyfriend. Shawn reached out his hand so she could take it. She barely touched him when he pulled her to his side and kissed her, more deeply than last time. She could feel his wet hair tickling her cheek and she pulled away.

"Happy?" he said, grinning. "I got all nice and clean, just for you."

"Your hair is wet," she said, her face set in a frown.

"Oh? You mean this hair?" He started shaking his hair towards her, getting her wet. She gasped and took a step back, glaring at him. "Aw, come on, lighten up, Lyddie. We won!"

"I didn't do anything."

Shawn rolled his eyes good naturally. "You're the reason why I wanted to win."

Lydia smiled slightly. "Come on, let's go," she said, pulling him to join the others.

"Today was great, wasn't it?" Shawn was telling her as they walked to the diner, hand in hand. "Coach was super happy today, which is saying something. I think that if we keep playing like this, we could go to the finals. That would make my dad super happy..."

The entire way, Shawn talked and Lydia listened to him. She always loved how excited he would get about everything but today, she just wanted him to stop talking. She was exhausted and couldn't be bothered to keep up with him as the other days.

In the diner, it didn't get easier. There were people talking all over the place, all of them wanting her attention. Shawn was talking about the game still and Heather was obsessing about her perfecting the last routine because it still didn't fit the standards. Deciding that she had enough of everyone, she excused herself to the restroom.

"Yeah, okay," Shawn said distractedly, his attention now on one of his teammates, and gave her a chaste kiss on the mouth as she passed him. Lydia was thankful that the restroom was empty, she needed some time alone from people. Going to the sink, she almost winced at

the sight in front of her.

The girl who looked back at her from the mirror was almost unrecognizable. Her eyes were tired, her smile looked forced, and she lacked color in the cheeks. Splashing her face with cold water, she pinched her cheeks, trying to give her face more life and put on her cheer smile.

A loud giggle startled her and made her turn around. She glanced around the small bathroom, convinced that she had been alone there. She waited a few seconds, straining her ears, expecting to hear that eerie giggle again.

The only sound she could hear was her heavy breathing, but she couldn't shake the feeling she wasn't alone. Feeling impatient, she peered down the four stalls and saw nothing. But that didn't satisfy her, and she opened each stall door, peering inside and seeing nothing.

Probably nothing, she figured, but still couldn't shake the feeling that she wasn't alone. Quickly, she straightened up and turned back to the mirror. Her face became flushed because of the small scare. At least that had been for something. Looking more presentable than before, Lydia exited the bathroom.

She peeked through the hall and could see everyone at her booth having a good time. Ally was talking to Cassie, while Heather was flirting with one of the football players. She pressed her lips tightly at the sight of Shawn, smiling and joking around, being the life of the party as always. There was a spot empty next to him, where she was supposed to be sitting.

She was about to join them when she saw the diner door open, more customers entering. She froze and felt herself become rooted in her spot. Unconsciously, she fiddled with the flower pendant around her neck, her eyes darting around the diner, trying to find an exit.

She didn't know what it was: the sudden appearance of somebody she had been avoiding or that eerie giggle coming from behind her, that she bolted to the exit nearest her, leaving the diner.

She glanced over her shoulder every second as she rushed to her house. The sun was setting, creating shadows all over the streets. She regretted her rash actions but it was too late to go back. That would only make things worse. She picked up her pace and felt relieved when she saw her street.

Her relief was short-lived once she entered her house and was greeted by the rare sight of her parents, lounging in the living room. She tried to sneak off but her dad caught sight of her.

"How was the game, honey?" her dad asked her, looking up from his newspaper.

"They won, like always," Lydia said shortly, slowly edging away. Her dad nodded, pleased with hearing that and went back to the newspaper.

"Where's Shawn?" her mom asked, looking over her daughter's shoulder, expecting to see her tall boyfriend hiding behind her.

Lydia felt slight guilt at the reminder of how she just ditched him but then she remembered how suffocated she felt in the booth.

"I have to take a shower," she said and waved goodbye to them as she went up the stairs.

"Don't forget that we're going to the Marks tonight," called her mom after.

"Okay," she said.

"You're babysitting your brother," her mom continued.

"Got it," she said, quickly going into her room and slamming the door before her mom decided to add anything else. She felt a weight lifted out of her chest now that she was in her safe space. She rested her head on the door, not sure what to do next.

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Lydia decided to make herself a hot bath instead and had lost count of how long she had been there. She had been able to hear her parents get ready for their outing, her brother argue with their dad

about something and then finally her parents leaving.

She stared at the water in front of her, her legs pulled up and her chin resting on them, her mind slowly getting out of the fog that she had been previously on. She wished she could stay in the water forever, not caring how wrinkling her hands were becoming and the water had become freezing cold.

Her eyes caught her razor and after seconds of hesitation, she carefully picked up the razor. She examined it, her fingers grazing the blade lightly. Just that single touch had managed to slice her skin. A drop of blood dripped into the water, ruining it from its cleanliness.

She stared at her bleeding finger, feeling a churning sensation in the pit of her stomach. She let out a shaky breath and curled her injured hand into a fist, still feeling the blood dripping down her hand.

*Stop*, she told herself and dropped her hand in the water. She rested her head on the edge of the bathtub, thinking about tomorrow. She had so much to do yet she didn't want to do it. She dreaded the next day and the days that followed.

She already knew that for the remainder of the week, the game would be the only thing that everyone would be talking about until another game happened. Monday and Wednesday she would take care of a little girl after school. She was going to do the same with her brother that Friday because her parents were attending their weekly bingo night at their friend's house. Saturday would be date night with Adam, either at the downtown movie theater or at the diner near the school. And then the cycle would repeat the following Monday.

A loud know startled her, made her drop the blade and accidentally cut herself.

"Dammit," she hissed sucking her palm, but it had been too late. The water had become even more stained with blood to her dismay. The knocking continued, making Lydia glared at the door. "What?"

"Did you die in there?" Richie, her younger brother, called from the other side.

She sighed and splashed the water in irritation. "What do you want?"

"You still alive? Then what's taking you so fucking long? Hurry up! I have to take a piss!"

"Every time, every fucking time" she hissed to herself and reluctantly stood up from the bath. "I can't a single moment to myself."

Richie, overhearing her, yelled, "Then buy your own house! I need the bathroom! Now!"

Richie was not going to stop banging the door until she was out. Quickly draining the bath, she stepped out. Richie hadn't stopped banging the door, leaving her no choice but to pick up her clothes and wrap the towel around her body.

"Jesus, fuck, here," she said, opening the door making Richie almost trip. "There, I'm out. You happy?"

"Oh my god! My eyes! My eyes!" Richie shrieked in horror, putting his hands over his eyes, his pathetic attempt to stop himself from being exposed to seeing her. "Put some clothes on."

"Could you be annoying?" she hissed.

Richie dropped his hands, his sudden horror gone, and pretended to think about. "Actually, now that you mention it..." Richie started farting from his armpit, adding loud obnoxious noise from his mouth.

"You disgusting little shit."

"At least I'm not a bitch," he shot back, taking no offense on her insult. He now saw it as a term of endearment from her. She rolled her eyes at that.

"Get out of my way," she said, pushing him to the side hard, and made her way to her bedroom.

"By the way, your stupid boyfriend called you," Richie informed her. "Tell him I'm not a fucking messenger boy."

Lydia ignored him and went straight to her room. She could hear

Richie gasping dramatically behind her, not missing the fact that she didn't defend Shawn like she did every time he made fun of him.

Carelessly, she laid down in her bed, still wrapped in a towel. Her hair was soaking wet and was most likely wetting her bedsheets, although she didn't care. The bedsheets were just another added thing that she had grown to hate.

She then sat up and rubbed her face in frustration, silently scolding herself. She reached over the radio that was by her bedside and turned it on, looking for a distraction.

*"Reached out a hand to touch your face. You're slowly disappearing from my view..."* The familiar song filled the room, filling her with energy to get up and change into comfortable clothes.

*"I ran all night and day,"* she sang to herself, dancing around her room and couldn't help but scoff. She truly was a terrible singer. *"And I ran. I ran so far away. I just ran..."*

Near the end of the song, her phone rang, most likely being Shawn. For a brief second, Lydia thought about picking up, knowing that there were going to be problems the next day if she didn't answer, but she went against it. She let it ring and decided to lay back down in her bed, feeling exhausted. She closed her eyes the moment her head touched the bed.

She would deal with Shawn tomorrow, she decided along with that there was nothing wrong with her. She was allowed to have bad days, she was allowed to have time on her own. Today was one of those days.

Maybe tomorrow everything would go back to normal.



### 3. Finder Weepers, Loser Keepers

**Authors Note:** Hello! I'm so surprised that I did not take a long time to have the chapter update. I guess I'm excited about this story because I got a little carried away with the chapter length.

Also, I watched *It: Chapter Two* and, obviously, loved it. It was really good, and not only that, it really helped me solidify what I want to do with Lydia and her story. It's still a long way for Lydia to get there, but it makes me happy that I finally have a full outline for her.

(Also if there are any errors, I will look them over later and fix them.)

Anyways, here's the new chapter and please let me know what you think! :)

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#### Chapter Two: Finder Weepers, Loser Keepers

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There was this story about Richie and Lydia that their parents loved to tell for some fucking reason. It was around the time Richie had been born. Lydia had finally been allowed to hold Richie on her own for the first time and baby Richie decided that it was a good idea to smack Lydia in the face. Smack was a little too harsh of a word but it was enough to trigger three-year-old Lydia. She didn't take it too kindly and retaliated by smacking his forehead. That lead to her being spanked by their father and be banned from holding Richie for a long time.

Lydia hated that story because it made her look like an asshole while Richie found it hilarious that he had been a troublemaker since birth. That story was probably told for laughs, but for the Tozier siblings, that story served as a reminder that they were going to be each other's throat for the rest of their lives.

Which didn't mean they didn't love each other. Richie loved his sister, more or less. Most of the time it was less. She had her moments. She could be nice, thoughtful and protective. But at the same time, she could be too bitchy, too rude, too self-absorbed. It was always about

her and her stupid boyfriend.

Lydia on the other hand... well, he was pretty sure she's been plotting his murder since she was four and he was one because their mom forced her to give up her stuffed bird and give it to him during one of his crying fits. Her love for him could be questioned many times but he knew where he stood for her. He loved his neurotic and at times psychotic, older sister.

But right now, he definitely questioned his love for her as he dealt with her stupid boyfriend.

"Is Lydia here?" Shawn asked, too cheerful in his opinion. Why was that guy always smiling? He was not going to win him over, so he needed to stop that or else he was going to slam the door in his pretty face.

"Nope, never meet a... what's that name again?" Richie pondered.

He was pleased with himself that Shawn's smile dropped.

"Come on, kid," he groaned, throwing his head back. "I need to talk to Lydia."

"You know phones exist, right?" Richie asked him. *Or are you too stupid to work one?*

"She's not answering my calls."

Richie shrugged. "Maybe she's grown tired of you and is hoping you take a hint and take a hike?"

"Okay, I get it, I get it," Shawn sighed, nodding to himself and started digging through his pocket, "we're doing this again. How much?"

Richie grinned at him. Now they were talking. "Ten bucks," he said, extending his hand.

Shawn paused as he pulled out his wallet and looked at Richie accusingly.

"Last time it was five."

"Times are hard," Richie shrugged.

"How is it hard? You're eleven."

"I'm twelve you asshole," Richie snapped, no longer finding this amusing. "And with that, it's twenty."

"No, no," Shawn said, shaking his head. "Come on. Don't do this to me, man. I'll give you the ten."

Richie pretended to contemplate it before sighing dramatically. "Fine."

Shawn took out a crisp ten dollar bill and handed it to Richie, who gladly took it. He made a show to make sure it wasn't a fake bill, making Shawn sigh in exasperation. Richie ignored him and took his time to pocket the money before looking back at Shawn.

"Happy?"

"I'm not unhappy. Okay, I'll be right back," he said and started closing the door.

"No, wait," Shawn said, putting his hand on the door. "Can't I come inside?"

"Sorry. Stranger danger," Richie said and slammed the door on Shawn's face. He grinned widely, turned around and went up the stairs. Lydia's bedroom door was shut but it wasn't locked, allowing him to make a dramatic entrance.

"What the...?" Lydia, clearly startled, looked up from the book she was reading. She had been on the bed on her stomach with her legs up in the air. "Richie, how many times have I told you to knock before you come on."

"Hello, my dear sister," he greeted her in a terrible British accent. "I'm here to inform you that your dumbass boyfriend is here."

"What?" It seemed that shocked Lydia more than his sudden appearance as she pushed herself up and accidentally shoved her book to her floor. "Wait... what? He's here?" Her eyes darted to the

door as if she expected to him appear any second. "Like Shawn is here?"

"Do you have another dumbass boyfriend that I don't know about?"

Lydia ignored his jab and glanced around the bedroom. One of her hands had gone to her hair, twisting it nervously. He watched her curiously, wondering what has crawled up her ass this time?

"Can you...?" she started but then cut herself off, shaking her head. "Never mind. I'll deal with it."

"I can get rid of him," Richie offered. "But for a fee."

"Richie," Lydia said, giving him a dirty look.

"Fine, I'll just tell him that you have explosive diarrhea."

"*Richie.*"

"Or you're bleeding to death because you accidentally cut yourself in the kitchen. Or, or... that you're projectile vomiting like that girl in the movie we saw last week."

"If you're going to be like that, get out of my room," she said and started making her way out. "I'll do it myself."

"No, no, I'll do it. It will give me a chance to slam the door in his face again," Richie said and left before Lydia could yell at him for being rude. He took large steps down the stairs and opened the door. Shawn had been sitting down on the stoop and sat up when he heard him.

"So?" he said, looking at him expectantly.

"Five bucks," he said and with the look Shawn gave him, he laughed. "Kidding. She's actually not here."

"What?"

"She's actually babysitting right now, now that I think about it."

"And you conveniently forgot to tell me that?"

"Oops?" Richie said, feigning innocence.

"You little..." Shawn grunted, looking irritated and took a deep breath. "Do you know who she is babysitting for?"

"What am I? Her mom? No, I don't keep tabs on her."

"You've been no help." Shawn frowned unhappily. "I want my ten bucks back."

"Finder weepers, loser keepers," Richie told him and had the opportunity to slam the door for the second time in Shawn's face.

"That's not even how you say it..." He could hear the older boy call him out other names but he didn't care. He got rid of him and got money in the process.

He turned back and saw Lydia standing at the top of the stairs. Shit, how much had she seen? If she heard about the money, she was going to force him to give it back to Shawn.

"What happened?" she asked and at the tone of her voice told him that she hadn't heard anything.

"Don't worry about it," he waved her off. "Just said that you ate something and you wouldn't be leaving the toilet for the rest of the day."

Lydia narrowed her eyes. "If I find out that you..."

"Hey! I got rid of your boyfriend, and for free may I add. You should be thanking me!"

Lydia looked at him for a few seconds before saying, "Thank you." She genuinely sounded grateful. "But I will still dick punch you if I find out that you told Shawn I had explosive diarrhea."

"Then it's a good thing I just told him that you have regular diarrhea."

She rolled her eyes and went back to her bedroom, slamming the

door shut. Richie pulled out his money and smiled as he admired his new ten dollar bill. Looks like someone was buying that new comic book after that. He couldn't wait to show it off to his friends.

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Days had passed, and Richie was reading one of his comic books in his bedroom, minding his own business when loud voices coming from the other side of the hall caught his attention.

What now? he thought. Nowadays, it was a common occurrence to have his sister and mom argue about something. And like always, Richie couldn't help and eavesdrop. Not because he wanted to, but they were so damn loud and it left him no choice. Opening the door, he peeked his head outside and could hear more clearly what was going on.

"... And you always do this. You're so mean. So judgemental," Lydia's angry voice floated over to him. She sounded like she was seconds away from crying. Which had been becoming a common occurrence. Anything would set the waterworks. It used to be funny, but now it was concerning him (although he would never admit that out loud).

"And you need to stop being sensitive, Lydia."

*Oh, now you've done it*, Richie winced. He made the mistake of calling Lydia that one time and he still had the battle scars.

"Me? Sensitive? Who's the one calling me fat?" Lydia yelled, no longer sounding like she was about to cry, and slammed something. That made Richie get out of his room and try to take a peek of what was happening but couldn't see since Lydia's bedroom door was closed.

"I didn't call you fat. I was just saying that you've gotten a little chubby."

"No, I haven't!"

"Your skirt is too tight on you. It doesn't fit you anymore. I know your body is changing but it's obvious that you've gained..."

"Are you kidding me? It fits me perfectly. I can see where Richie got his blindness."

Richie glared at the door. No need to drag him into their fights.

"Watch your mouth, young lady."

"Okay, so you can call me fat, a total lie, but I can't say you're blind, which is true because you're saying I'm FAT? I'm not FAT!"

"Lydia, stop yelling. I am trying to talk to you but you keep yelling."

"Because you keep insulting me!"

"I was only trying to tell you that you need to cut down on those greasy foods."

"Oh my, God. Stop telling what to do, Maggie."

Everything became suddenly became silent and Richie felt the tension suffocate him even from where he was. He decided that he didn't want to hear the rest of the fight and went back to his room. He glanced at his comic book, realized that he also didn't feel like reading his comic book and decided to just lay down in bed. He couldn't hear his mom and sister anymore but knew that they were probably still arguing.

Hours later, Richie had migrated to the couch with his comic books, wanting a change of scenery and was reading it when Lydia stalked into the living room and plopped down on the couch with him. He eyed her carefully, wondering if she would snap his neck if he made one of his usual jokes. Seeing that there was no steam coming out of her ears, he decided to take a risk.

"What's the matter, Doc?" he said and was proud that not only did he do a good imitation of Bugs Bunny, but he swore that he saw the corner of Lydia's mouth twitch.

"Talk to me like that again and I'll give you a wedgie."

"Ah, watch it, Bub," Richie said, now in a Daffy Duck voice.

"You're such a nerd," she said, glancing over him and looking over his comic books. Richie shrugged and picked a new one up.

"Look, I got this one because she reminded me of you."

Lydia looked over at the comic and frowned. "I remind you of Wonder Women?"

"You wish," he said and pointed to the weird shaped monster Wonder Women was beating up. "You could be twins with that thing."

Lydia proceeded to punch him in the shoulder, making him whine.

"What the fuck, Lydia?"

"Richie." Mrs. Tozier chose that moment to show up. She was fixing her makeup with a compact mirror and put it down to give her son a disapproving look. "Do not use that foul language."

"Sorry, Mom," he muttered, slouching on the couch.

"Don't slouch," she told him, making Richie throw his hands in exasperation. She shifted her attention to her daughter. "Lydia, your father and I are going to go out. Take care of Richie. Make him lunch and make sure that he goes to sleep before nine."

Lydia ignored her by pretending to be engrossed in Richie's comic book. Their mom frowned and was about to say something but Richie beat her.

"Mom," Richie protested. "I'm not a baby. I can take care of myself. And why do I have to go to sleep at nine? It's Friday! Let me go to bed late. I did really well in my last test. I'm doing so much better than Lydia."

"Shut up, Richie."

"Make me."

"Richie, listen to your mother. Lydia, don't fight with your brother."

Their father had decided to join in the conversation. He was dressed up as nicely as their mother which confused Richie. Where the hell were they going? Derry was a small town, there was not a lot of places for them to go. But he never asked because he never really



cared. He grimaced when his father ruffled his hair.

"Come on, buddy. Be good to your sister. Lydia," he said, forcing her to look at him. "Remember, Lydia, no boys allowed."

She looked at Richie and smiled at him. "You heard him, Richie. Get out."

"Get out," he mocked her and stuck his tongue out. Lydia returned the gesture, making their dad sigh.

"Kids, enough."

Their mom kissed both of their foreheads. When she got to Lydia, she pushed her off, making their mom sigh in resignation. She tried again and pushed the hair off Lydia's face. Richie watched, feeling slightly anxious at what Lydia would do. His sister did nothing, burning holes at Richie's comic book.

"We'll be back after midnight," she said. Saying their goodbyes and warning them to behave, their parents made their way out. Lydia glowered at them, or more specifically at their mom. Richie to swipe the comic book from Lydia's hand, who didn't notice.

After several minutes, she stood up and said, "Are you hungry?"

He wasn't excited about eating canned soup but was a little afraid of how Lydia would react if he said no.

"Yeah, I could eat," he said and went back to his comic book.

"Okay," she said, nodding distractedly, and started heading to the kitchen but then stopped halfway. Richie noticed that and looked up, confused. She stood there for a long time before she seemingly snapped out of whatever thought she was on. Richie was getting concerned about her behavior. He had just seen a movie with Eddie where the main character acted strangely like her sister and proceeded to kill everyone in their proximity, and he had no plans on being murdered that day.

"Lydia—"

"Do you want to eat burgers?" she asked suddenly, and Richie looked at her as if she had lost her mind.

"You're going to make them?"

Lydia rolled her eyes. "Don't be stupid," she said, and that reaction made him relax. She was back to her old self which meant he was not going to die. "I mean it you want to go out and eat burgers?"

Richie straightened up and pushed his glasses up. "Are you serious?"

Lydia nodded. "Yeah, come on, let's go before I change my mind and give you cold soup."

Richie couldn't help but grin excitedly. It was rare for Lydia to do something nice for Richie and although he suspected she was doing this to spite their mom, he wasn't complaining. He was getting hamburgers and that was all that mattered.

Not wasting time, he followed Lydia to the garage to get their bikes. Before they left, Lydia surprised Richie once more.

"Do you want to invite one of your friends?"

"Seriously?"

"Yeah, I don't care," she shrugged, her gaze fixed on the trees in the yard in front of them. "Better for me. You get to annoy someone that isn't me."

As great it was that one of his friends could come along with them it left Richie with a difficult choice. He had to be wise with who he picked because if Lydia was about to start driving, and if he picked the wrong friend, she was never going to take him out.

Eddie was out; he would annoy her with his constant worrying and never-ending facts about how they could die by not washing their hands. Bill was out too. Lydia spent too much time with him already because she would often babysit him and his younger brother, Georgie. So, she would most likely not want to be around him and, as shitty as it was, he knew sometimes Bill's stuttered exasperated her on her bad days. Which left...

"Let's go. I know who," Richie said, motioning with his head.

They quickly reached their destination and he dropped his bike carelessly, something that made Lydia call after him when he ran to knock on the door. Stanley looked surprised to see Richie standing in front of his porch.

"Stan the Man, how are you?" Richie said brightly.

"What are you doing here?" he asked suspiciously, and glanced over his shoulder, seeing Lydia waiting for them. He looked back at Richie, confused. "What's going on?"

"Come on, me and Lydia are going to the diner," Richie said eagerly. "She said one of my friends can come."

Stanley glanced over his shoulder again and then back at him.

"I don't know," he said uncertainty, fidgeting with his shirt. "I need to be studying my—"

"Your dad isn't here. He's at the synagog, right? He won't come until later," Richie said. "Come on, I know you want to come. You get a break from your boring church homework and you get to stare at Lydia all you want."

Stanley looked annoyed at the last comment. "How many times have I told you..." he muttered but stopped, seeing that it was useless. He looked back at Lydia and then back at his house. "Let me just let my mom know that I'm going to be gone."

Richie first bumped, thrilled that his friend was joining them. "Bring your bike," he ordered, and Stanley nodded, retreating back to his house.

"Is he coming?" Lydia asked when Richie went back to her and picked up his bike.

"Yeah, he's coming," he said. Lydia nodded distractedly. When Stanley stepped out of his house, Richie clapped his hands. "Andale, Andale, Stan the Man."

Lydia kicked Richie's shin, making him stop mid shout.

"What the fuck, Lydia?"

She shushed him when Stanley reached them.

"Hi, Lydia," he said shyly.

"Yeah, hi," she said, not really paying attention to him. "Come on, I'm starving."

Richie picked up his bike and climbed back in. He shot a mischievous grin to Stanley.

"Last one is a rotten toe," he said, zooming past Lydia and Stanley.

"Richie, that's cheating," Stanley called after him, trying to keep up with him. He was sure he had it in the bag when, out of nowhere, Lydia passed him and took the lead. It was a tough call, but in the end, she came out victorious.

"Dammit," he groaned when he reached the diner. Lydia shot him a smirk as she parked her bike.

Even for a Friday, they had no problem finding an empty booth. Lydia forced Richie to sit next to her, a small attempt to keep him in check. If Richie sat next to Stanley, not only would he irritate her and Stanley, but he would annoy the waitress. But, even with that small attempt to keep him in check, Richie somehow managed to annoy everyone around him. Stanley, who was trying to order something couldn't because Richie kept taking his menu. Lydia kept getting elbowed in the ribs, which she would return back. He was pretty sure the waitress was avoiding their table because of him.

"I'm going to the restroom to wash my hands," Lydia said and gave Richie a warning look. "If you get us kicked out by the time I come back, I am going to choke you."

"Me?" Richie said, pretending to be confused. "I think you should be telling that to Stan the Man."

She glanced at Stanley and snorted in disbelief. Yeah, the boy that

was currently folding his napkin for the fourth time was going to get them kicked out. Stanley looked up from his task and turned a little red, realizing everyone's attention was on him.

"What?"

"See?" Richie said, pointing exaggeratedly at Stanley. "That man is a menace."

"Shut up, Richie," Stanley said, frowning in annoyance.

"A menace, I say."

Lydia rolled her eyes and walked away from them. Surprisingly, Lydia didn't actually seem to be annoyed at them. Yeah, Richie was being too much like always and she always made it clear she was never a fan of dealing with Richie's friend, but today that didn't seem to bother her. Although, if they got kicked out, Richie was sure that she was going to pretend she didn't know them.

"Why are you being like this?" Stanley asked when she was gone.

"Oh, I am sorry, am I getting in your way of you staring at my sister's chest?"

Stanley rolled his eyes but did turn pink at that comment to Richie's delight. There was a bigger chance that Stanley was more intimidated by his sister than attracted, but he still liked to give him shit as much as possible. He wanted to make it clear to all of his friends—Bill, Eddie, and Stanley—that if they decided to have a crush on her, the price to pay was to deal with his never-ending teasing. Lucky for him, Stanley was the easiest pick on because he was easy to rattle.

"What are you getting?" Richie asked him when he saw that Stanley wasn't going to fall for his bait.

"I don't know because you keep taking my menu."

"Ah, don't act like you're not going to get the same thing."

By the time, Lydia came back from the restroom, the boys had picked what they wanted and the waitress was just waiting on her. She

ordered a hamburger with extra fries and the waitress left them on their own. Dinner went by, with only a few hitches along the way.

Stanley and Richie talked to each other, Lydia not saying much except when Richie got too loud. Oh, and there was also the mistake Richie made on commenting that isn't eating burgers fattening and Lydia is supposed to be losing weight. That made Lydia's face turn red in anger.

"I am not fat," she hissed, her fingers gripping the fork that was next to her tightly. "I am just adjusting to my changing body."

Now it was Stanley's turn to red in the face, who automatically looked at her chest when she said that.

"Oh, shit," Lydia said and Stanley jumped, thinking he was caught and turn even redder than before. But Lydia wasn't looking at him, she was too busy slouching down in her seat. Richie didn't get a chance to tease her because someone called out his sister's name.

"Lydia!"

Richie's sister tensed at the voice and reluctantly turned to face the Coopers. She had put on her cheer smile, making Richie silently snigger.

"Mrs. Cooper," Lydia greeted politely and turned to her husband. "Mr. Cooper. What a pleasure to see you tonight."

"I was telling John, that looks like Karen and Adam's kids, and look at that, I was right."

"Yeah, I'm just taking Richie and his friend to eat," she said, shrugging as if it was not a big deal.

Mrs. Cooper smiled. "You are such a good sister."

"It's no wonder Molly adores you," Mr. Cooper finally spoke up. He glanced at Richie and smiled at him. "How you doing, kiddo?"

"He's fine," Lydia said shortly, not letting Richie speak and that was fine with him. Richie hated doing small talk with adults. Lydia was

always better charming adults, the Coopers were being a clear example, practically drooling over her. It was no secret they adored Lydia.

"But I am glad that I ran into you, dear," Mrs. Cooper said, clapping her hands. "I was going to call you but it's even better that I caught you here. I was hoping if you babysat Molly this Saturday afternoon, from twelve until eleven. John and I have to go out of town and we can't take Molly. You know how she gets fuzzy in long car rides..."

Mrs. Cooper continued prattling, and the more she talked, the more Lydia looked uncomfortable. Richie realized that they were fucked. The Coopers were good friends with their parents, and Mrs. Cooper had a big mouth so she was naturally going to tell their mom. He could already imagine the lecture Lydia was going to get when she found out they had been eating hamburgers.

"That's going to be a long day," Lydia said, interrupting Mrs. Cooper, frowning. "Practically the entire day she's going to be with me."

"I know, but we will pay you more. We thought about leaving Molly with someone else, but she's always behaved better with you."

"You're going to come late, and I don't know if my dad is going to pick me up..."

"Don't worry about that," Mr. Cooper said, waving her off. "I will drop you off home."

Lydia gave him a strained smile. "You don't have too."

"Nonsense, Lydia." Mr. Cooper disagreed, smiling at her. "If you get lonely, you can invite one of your friends. Or your boyfriend."

Richie made a face to Stanley, and he was pleased to see that Stanley had a hard time keeping a straight face.

"John," Mrs. Cooper scolded him, slapping his shoulder lightly. "Lydia is a good girl. She would never do that."

"You sure about that?" Richie mumbled.

"I think me and Molly will be fine on our own," Lydia said, discreetly pinching Richie's side, and turned to Mrs. Cooper. "Let me ask my parents and see what they say. I'll call you tomorrow and let you know."

That seemed to satisfy the Coopers, and they quickly said their goodbyes, to the relief for the kids in the table.

"Finally," Richie said. "I thought they would never leave."

"Beep, beep, Richie," Lydia said, making Richie scowl at her. He hated it when she said that. He'd rather have her twist his nipple than be said that.

"Mom was right, you are fat," he retorted, making Stanley choke on his drink and Lydia gape at him.

"I'm going to kill you," she said, making Richie shove the remaining fries in his plate and bolted as fast as he could. He could hear Lydia calling after him but he was not taking any chances.

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"Can we go to the comic book store?" Richie asked her, even though he was already making a beeline to the store. Stanley had joined soon after he had bolted and they had been waiting impatiently for Lydia to get out of the diner.

"Don't take anything from there," she warned him.

"I know not to steal. Come on Stan, let's see who can find the biggest..." Richie stopped talking when he realized that Stanley hadn't followed him. He turned around and saw that Stanley was standing next to Lydia. He took a step closer as Lydia jumped at Stanley's voice. It seemed that she hadn't realized that he hadn't joined her brother.

"It's alright," he was able to hear her say to Stanley. "You were doing me a favor honestly. I would've probably strangled Richie if you hadn't been there."

"Oh." Stanley had been around a long time to know that Lydia was mildly kidding about that. "Thank you still for everything."



"You can pay me back by telling Richie that you can only be there for half an hour and then we leave." She patted Stanley's head as if he was a well behaved golden retriever (which in a way that we the best way to describe Stanley). Richie tried not to laugh at Stanley's disgruntled reaction, either because she touched his hair or talked to him like a child. "I'm going to sit down over here, okay?"

Richie and Stanley watched Lydia go over to a bench that was near the town square. Stanley then turned around and sighed when he saw Richie, who was grinning mischievously.

"Ooh, do you have a crush on Lyddie, Stan the Man?"

"Shut up, Richie," Stanley said, motioning him to go inside the store. "I was being polite and thanking her for buying us lunch. I didn't see you thanking her."

"I'm her brother, I don't need to do that crap," he said, waving off Stanley and going towards one of the racks of comics.

"Maybe that's why she's always angry at you. You're never nice to her," Stanley said.

"Oh, I'm sorry. She buys you food and now you're her number one fan now? I didn't realize you were easy to buy," Richie said, looking at him in disbelief.

"I'm just saying. You're not nice to her, so obviously, she's not going to be nice to you."

"Have you met my sister? She has never been nice to me in my entire life."

"She's nice to me," Stanley pointed out. "She's nice to Eddie and Bill, too."

"Big whoop," Richie muttered, flipping through a comic book. "She's being nice once in her life. She's probably trying to get on my good side so she can get something."

Stanley looked skeptical. "Really? She doesn't really seem to want anything. I mean, didn't you notice?"

"What do you mean?" Richie demanded.

"Today, she was just... I don't know. Weird I guess." Stanley shrugged. "She didn't really eat, she didn't yell at you for making those voices she hates so much. You know her better than I do. Can't you see it?"

"Yeah, well, stop stalking my sister," Richie said childishly.

"I'm not," Stanley said hotly. "I'm just saying something is off about her. Maybe it's not even that big of a deal. Probably girl stuff. Maybe she got in a fight with her boyfriend."

"Wouldn't that be great," he muttered darkly.

Stanley looked at him curiously. "Why don't you like Lydia's boyfriend?"

That was a good question, why did Richie not like Shawn? He didn't have a legitimate reason, at least according to his sister, but something about him rubbed Richie the wrong way and that was enough for him.

"Why not?" he said, shrugging. "He's a dumbass, he's loud, he's annoying. Lydia could do better." Richie looked at Stanley accusingly. "Why do you care?"

"I'm just wondering. I hear you complain about him all the time and I still haven't met the guy so I don't have an opinion about him. But Bill says he's alright."

"Bill thinks *Nightmare at Elm Street 3* is alright, so I don't think he has the best judgment."

"True, he's friends with you, so what does he know?" Stanley hummed and picked up a comic book, earning a glare from Richie.

And with that, the conversation died with that. Flipping through a comic, Richie couldn't help but feel irked that Stanley was pointing out all of those things about his sisters. Which weren't true, there was nothing wrong with Lydia. She was her mean old bitchy self.

But the more he tried to ignore it and focus on the comic book he was holding, what Stanley said to him stuck inside his head. If he was being honest, Lydia wasn't that horrible, but she had been super mean lately. Like, she wasn't always like that. She was just unbearable to be around the last few months. Anything set her off, like the crying and the yelling and the brooding.

Glancing back, he was able to see her sitting on the bench all alone. Lydia looked miserable. It wasn't in your face obvious, but growing up with her in his entire life, Richie was able to tell that something was wrong with her. He was a little irritated that Stanley had noticed it first than him, but still. Stanley just knew something was up while Richie knew that it was because she was upset. But about what? He had no idea. Maybe she and the dumbass had broken up. But Richie knew that wasn't the case. If that happened, Lydia would have been suicidal.

Too soon for his liking, Stanley was telling him it was time to go. He left the store with him and saw that Lydia was already waiting for them. The three of them made their way back to Stanley's house in silence, everyone lost in their own thoughts. By the time they had made it Stanley's house, it had gotten dark.

"I'll see you Monday," Stanley was telling Richie.

"Maybe we can go to the arcade tomorrow," Richie suggested. "I know Bill is free."

"Doesn't Eddie have a doctor's appointment?"

Richie rolled his eyes. "Eddie always has a doctor's appointment."

"Okay, yeah, I'll let you know," he said and then turned to Lydia. "Thanks again."

"I said it's no problem," she said. With that, Stanley went back to his house. "Come on, let's go."

The walk from Stanley's to Tozier house wasn't long, especially if they went on their bikes. But Lydia insisted that it was too late to be biking, that someone in a car might not see them and run them over,

blah, blah. Honestly, moments like these made sense why Stanley was the one Lydia tolerated out of all of their friends. Both of them were such a stick in the mud.

Remembering what Stanley had said at the comic book store, Richie sighed loudly, earning a strange look from Lydia, and turned to her.

"Thank you for the food and for letting me bring Stanley," he said and when she didn't say anything, he added, "But I'm not saying anything about the comic book. You still owe me one for ripping the last one."

Lydia was full of surprises that day because she actually smiled at him. It wasn't that false cheer smile she wore during football games or the disgustingly sweet one she would save for Shawn, but a genuine one. Granted, it was small, but it was there. She looked like she was about to say something but seemed to change her mind and pressed her mouth tightly.

"Don't tell Dad and Mom that I took you to the diner or else..." she started saying and Richie nodded.

"Yeah, yeah, I know. I am dead meat. I know the drill."

That made Lydia slap the back of his head. He groaned, rubbing the spot where she got him. When she glanced back, he flipped her off with his free hand, making her smirk.

That day had been really strange but it wasn't awful. It could've been worse. Lydia could have made him diner and he would have gotten food poisoning by the end of the night.